

Minutes  
Catawba County Board of Commissioners  
Special Session, October 15, 2007, 7:45 a.m.

**Board of Commissioners**

Special Session – Retreat

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The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Monday, October 15, 2007 at 7:45 a.m. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Meeting Room of the Government Center in Newton, North Carolina. The purpose of this Special Session was to conduct a retreat to discuss the Board's goals for July 1, 2208 – June 30, 2009, review a draft recreation plan, receive Catawba Valley Medical Center's Facilities Plan, discuss public information and citizen engagement and review the proposed use of the Slanting Bridge Road property.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes, Vice-Chair Barbara G. Beatty and Commissioners Glenn E. Barger, Lynn M. Lail and Dan Hunsucker.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, County Attorney Debra Bechtel, Planning Director Jacky Eubanks, Senior Planner Mary George, Senior Planner Susan Ballbach, Parks Division Manager Blair Rayfield, Catawba Valley Medical Center President Tony Rose, Public Information Officer Dave Hardin, Utilities and Engineering Director Barry Edwards, Public Services Administrator Jack Chandler and County Clerk Barbara Morris.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. after a brief, light breakfast.
2. After review, discussion and revision of the proposed goals, the following goals were identified for the Board of Commissioners for July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009:
  1. Continue to develop strategies to create jobs.
    - a. Facilitate an analysis of skill sets missing in the workforce and insure that corresponding training and re-training is available and accessible.
    - b. Continue to invest in the County's quality of life, infrastructure (e.g., water and sewer, multi-jurisdictional park) and other necessary incentives to attract jobs.
    - c. Continue to insure that critical transportation needs are championed to the North Carolina Department of Transportation.
  2. Continue to support K through 12 educational opportunity.
  3. Build on the success of Catawba Valley Community College, the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center and the NC Center for Engineering Technology.
  4. Support a greater presence of the State University system.
  5. Begin implementation of a parks master plan with an initial priority of preparing to develop the Mountain Creek park in the southeastern portion of the county in FY 2009-2010.

Commissioner Glenn Barger made a motion to approve these goals. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Jacky Eubanks, Planning Director, came forward to present a comprehensive parks master plan. He stated it was the mission of Catawba County parks to preserve Catawba County's unique and diverse natural heritage through education and conservation, while providing quality passive recreational opportunities, amenities and services. He said three issues needed to be addressed – are our parks luxury items that should be funded during good times or do they play a major role in educating our young people and supporting economic development and do they help to preserve our environment?

The purpose of the day's presentation was to present the draft master plan and receive the Board's reaction to the plan and then the plan would be taken to the citizen action committee. The plan is for a ten year period – 2007 – 2017. The plan would then be returned to the Board for adoption after receiving citizen input.

The county has been in the passive park business for seven years after the opening of Riverbend Park in 1999 and Bakers Mountain Park in 2002. It was believed it was now time to evaluate the County's exiting park facilities and services and identify the need and desire for additional parks and facilities and thus the

development of the parks master plan at this time. The Board appointed a parks focus group to work with staff and a consultant to identify what were the needs and recommendations and match up the recommendations with the small area plan recommendations. Citizens were surveyed on their wants and needs and what areas needed to be improved upon. Several areas that were identified were increased hours of operation, add to and improve the trail system, look at providing primitive camping and picnic facilities. People also listed greenways and paved trails as priorities and indicated the southeastern region should be the site for a new regional park.

As needs are identified, there are opportunities to expand the County's existing parks. The County bought the land for both Riverbend and Bakers Mountain and then used PARTF funds to improve the sites but the land itself was purchased by the County. Moving forward PARTF funds can be used to buy additional land for expansion or for park facilities.

Future park recommendations were for Mountain Creek Park, greenways (in phases) (with cities and county partnering in responsibility), a park at Bunker Hill Covered Bridge, and a presence at Lyle Creek rest area. Jacky identified future opportunities such as open space in the buffer space around the eco-facility at the landfill and the possibility of a greenway connector from Newton to Maiden and down into Lincoln County – utilizing a railtrail.

Priorities would be land acquisition, address the St. Stephen park and pool situation, continued funding from State and Federal grants, Mountain View recreation complying with ADA requirements, Bunker Hill Covered Bridge to be reopened, Lyle Creek greenway connector, Mountain Creek Park and existing parks enhancements and expansions. – These priorities would be changed to reflect the Commissioners goals that had been adopted and had place Mountain Creek Park as a top priority.

To reach these goals State and Federal funding will be sought. Survey results indicate that citizens desire the parks open on an expanded schedule, thus increasing present operating costs. Capital improvements are estimated as follows: (a 8 year service plan) Renovation and Improvement: \$400,000; Land acquisition: \$1,200,000; Park Development Program: \$3,041,500 and Greenway acquisition and development: \$600,000 – for a total of \$5,841,500. A dedicated source of local revenue is necessary to meet these goals and suggested sources were property/sales tax revenues, general obligation bonds, fee in-lieu of contributions and user fees/registration fees.. Suggested funding/acquisition sources were grants, contributions, park foundations and partnerships. .

Jacky stated it was all about education, economy and environment. The next step was to present the master plan to the Focus Group for plan endorsement (early November), the Planning Board for recommendation (late November) and the Board of Commissioners for adoption (late December).

After discussion, it was determined that the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge park should be looked at in two phases – first deal with the rest stop and then determine whether the Bridge area should be turned into a park.

Following the Parks Master Plan presentation, Board members visited the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge site and Riverbend Park and had a boxed lunch in the park. (Departed at 10:25 a.m.)

4. Upon its return from the parks visit (2:30 p.m.), the Board discussed with County Manager J. Thomas Lundy and County Clerk Barbara Morris the method it received information regarding state board vacancies and if the commissions chose to continue to receive this information. It was determine the current process would continue until the next election for Governor. The county board membership information was also discussed and the Clerk was directed to provide board members with updated books on the board membership with quarterly supplements that would update the books held by the Board members.
5. Tony Rose, President, Catawba Valley Medical Center, presented the hospital's facilities plan. The plan was started about 1 ½ years ago and work with an architectural firm – Freeman and White – was initiated. This past year, after a wish list was established, it was determined what the hospital could afford. It was established that the hospital needed to maintain operations at their current capacity level during construction and the hospital and staff couldn't be disrupted during construction. It was decided that oncology, surgery and women services were where the renovations were needed. A site was determined

that would allow the addition to be constructed in an existing parking lot and had area for construction equipment and parking. The addition would be multi-floored (minimum 3 levels) and would house women services which would have a separate entrance from the oncology entrance. The first floor would be oncology outpatient services, the second women's services and inpatient oncology and the third would be surgery. The estimated cost is \$68 million. The timeframe is that occupancy of the new pavilion will be sometime in 2010. The plan for financing is to request the issuance of bonds and there will be a capital campaign to assist in funding (hopefully 5-10%).

6. Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley and Public Information Officer David Hardin presented an update on the strategies for public information and citizen engagement. Mr. Worsley stated staff intended to build on the ICMA study and the staff's own analysis of where the County stood in this area. He thanked Dave Hardin for his hard work on the plan. He also complimented the hard work of the IT department. The plan was initiated in 2006 and in 2007 strategies were put in place and implementation was initiated. Since the plan implementation, the County E-mail newsletter was launched and has been well received and won a National Association of County Information Officers Award of Excellence and an award from the City-County Communications and Marketing Association's Savvy Program. The County website was redesigned and ICMA recommendations were incorporated in the site. Language translation for the site was implemented and most pages of the site can be translated into eight languages. The development of a coordinated, effective use of Emergency Service's Community Alert System was accomplished and went into operation in July 2007 and a subscription service to the website allows text notification to cell phones, pagers and PDA's during emergency and non-emergency events. Progress has been made in reacquainting the community with the County's Speaker Bureau and working with other municipalities, non-profits and businesses to get County information into their publications. The Board approved the development of a Catawba County Youth Council and Cooperative Extension will provide staff support for this effort. Future outcomes for the current fiscal year are an increased presence on television, launching audio podcasts and these are now available on the website and RSS feeds were launched with the newly designed website, develop monthly coffee or breakfast chats for one-on-one contact, develop and place newspaper inserts but these involve costs (approx. \$3500), and explore a Catawba County blog – but does not seem to be a significant need at this time. Additional suggested outcomes for FY07/08 were to work with CVCC to increase the County's presence on TV, create an official team of existing PIOs within the organization to address citizen engagement and use the PIO team to complete and implement a branding strategy and implement the employee ambassador idea and identify ways to better inform employees of the work of the County, work with PIO team to develop and implement specific, targeted e-newsletters, develop a broader presence in the community, implement updates to the design of the County's website, examine the feasibility of a citizen survey to gauge effectiveness of citizen engagement and public information and work with Hickory and Newton to gauge feasibility of merging citizen academy program or adding a county component to their academies.

Community meetings were discussed. Chair Barnes said that they had had mixed responses to having the Board meetings out in the communities. Listening tours and open houses were discussed and meeting for just specific issues were suggested. Chair Barnes stated she thought the normal board meetings should be kept at the courthouse and more informal meetings would be better out in the community – on a specific subject – to get public input. Vice-Chair Beatty said when food was involved, the response was better or maybe partner with other agency activities – i.e. flu shots, city council meetings, at the libraries. The consensus seemed to be more informal and with food would get better results. Commissioner Barger said the demand for this type of thing needed to be assessed – is this what the citizens really wanted. Mr. Worsley clarified that topics needed to be identified and if this was what the people really wanted. A survey was suggested.

7. Barry Edwards, Director of Utilities and Engineering presented a site study analysis regarding relocating the Sherrills Ford Solid Waste Convenience Center to the Slanting Bridge Road property. The County's goals are to provide a solid waste convenience center in the Sherrills Ford area that provides a safe facility for the public to use and for staff to operate while providing for increased demand and expanded services offered at the convenience center and to also provide a location that allows adequate space for a future Solid waste Transfer Station in order to reduce truck traffic within the County and related cost. To accomplish these goals at a common location will require the relocation and development of a new convenience center. The County's existing Slanting Bridge Road site offers this and many other desired attributes, such as property ownership, adequate land area to screen infrastructure and space for

improved ingress and egress, and easy access to area thoroughfares.

The current Sherrills Ford Road site accepts only residential solid waste and recycled materials. During fiscal year 2006-07, over 1,400 tons of garbage was managed through the convenience center and hauled to the Blackburn MSW Landfill requiring over 250 trips while serving over 28,000 customer visits, over 100 per day, which indicates how busy this site is and why public safety is an increasing concern.

The existing Sherrills Ford Road site is located on property that the County leases from Crescent Resources, LLC. The existing lease is a zero dollar lease; however, Crescent Resources is demanding \$300.00 per month plus a prorated share of ad valorem tax, added liability insurance, the termination of used motor oil collection and prohibit antifreeze collection. The County has approached Crescent Resources about purchasing additional property around the existing site but available property is not adequate to improve or provide additional services and all attempts to purchase property to sustain the current level of service have been unsuccessful.

The existing site has inadequate area, which creates difficulties in operating the site safely and efficiently. The goals for the Sherrills Ford Convenience Center cannot be achieved through utilizing the existing site. The increasing demand for existing solid waste services in the Sherrills Ford area has outgrown the existing site.

If the existing Sherrills Ford Road site could be expanded onto adjacent properties, the site would have to close during the construction period and the preliminary estimated cost to expand the Sherrills Ford Road site is \$598,950, which are dollars spent on non-county owned property and would mean the loss of ad valorem tax revenue and this cost estimate does not include any lease or property purchase costs. In addition, expanding the existing site would terminate one existing service and not deliver any new services and access to the site would remain unsafe.

The Slanting Bridge Road site is located on Slanting Bridge Road approximately 0.7 miles south of the intersection with Highway 150. The site is proposed to be located on a portion of a 39.5 acre tract of undeveloped property currently owned by Catawba County. The site is approximately 2.0 miles south of the existing Sherrills Ford Road site.

The front of the proposed site is located along a ridge and the site gently slopes away from Slanting Bridge Road. The property's size and configuration provides for the unhindered development of a new convenience center and the ability to achieve all of the convenience center goals. The size allows for the facility to be constructed with adequate staging areas for both the public and center personnel. Slanting Bridge Road provides adequate access to the site and there is sufficient space to construct ingress and egress locations that will negate the stacking of vehicles in the public road right-of-way. The site has sufficient acreage to allow for future development and construction of complimentary County facilities and services.

The conceptual layout of the proposed site initially utilizes approximately 2.0 acres of the property which will provide for the desired expanded services. The conceptual layout is also configured to provide for safe vehicular access to and from the site and on-site vehicular circulation with limited conflicts between the public and operations traffic. The plan provides adequate loading and unloading zones during busy times of operation and allows for safe and efficient access to the roll-off and recycling containers by the hauling trucks. Further, the Slanting Bridge Road property is of adequate size to allow for the future construction of a transfer station and emergency storm debris storage. The preliminary estimated cost for the development and construction of the Slanting Bridge Road site is \$690,720.

Under the existing conditions, the Sherrills Ford Road site is inadequate to meet area's current needs or expanded service goals. Further, the existing site including possible expansion does not allow expanded services or fully meet the performance objective of separating the public from operational traffic. The site does not allow for expansion to address future demand or the construction of additional infrastructure (i.e., transfer station, white goods collection, yard waste collection, C&D collection, etc...) for future services. Further, to remain on the existing site, the County must enter into a lease with Crescent or a purchase agreement must be reached. While improvements at the existing site can sustain the existing level of service, the proposed lease agreement prohibits the collection used oil and antifreeze and does not provide

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adequate area for any additional services. The County's long term goals cannot be fully achieved at the Sherrills Ford Road site.

The proposed Slanting Bridge Road site meets all the performance objectives and provides sufficient acreage to meet the County's goals in an aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly manner including the future expansion of services at the site.

All costs associated with any work performed in conjunction with the relocation of the Sherrills Ford Convenience Center will come out of the Solid Waste Fund and are generated through tipping fees collected for the disposal of waste. No tax funds are used in solid waste management, construction, or operations.

Commissioners had questions regarding the value of land and was it the best use for that property and if other properties had been investigated for this use. The tax value of the Slanting Bridge property is \$239,900 (the county paid \$381,495 for it in June 2000). Staff was asked to investigate the reason for the loss in value. Without research, the possibilities were changes in zoning, the county could have paid too much for the property or the property could be assessed too low. Chair Barnes suggested a field trip to the site.

The proposed schedule for the change would be:

Board of Commissioners Approval	October 15, 2007
Public Information Meeting	November 2007
Notice to Proceed for Design	November 2007
Complete Design and Permitting	February 2008
Advertise for Construction Bids	February 2008
Receive Construction Bids	March 2008
Recommendation of Bid Award to Sub-Committee	March 2008
Board of Commissioners Award of Construction Bid	April 2007
Notice to Proceed for Construction Contract	May 2008
Complete Construction and Begin Operations	August 2008

It was agreed the convenience center needed to be moved – but it was also agreed that other sites besides the Slanting Bridge property needed to be investigated and to verify the true current value of the property – and if that property was saleable and what another site would cost if the Slanting Bridge property was sold.

8. Adjournment. Chair Barnes adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

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Katherine W. Barnes, Chair  
Catawba County Board of Commissioners

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Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk